Introduction

The Ohio University Leadership Project (OULP) primarily provides professional development sessions for education administrators throughout southern Ohio. The purpose of this evaluation was to identify practices that should be continued, discontinued, and/or revised.

Methodology

This evaluation used a hybrid formative-summative methodology in order to create a comprehensive picture of what has been accomplished in recent years as well as a set of recommendations for a new strategic plan looking toward the future. The evaluation used focus groups and a survey as data sources. All data were collected during the 2016–2017 school year. Findings from this evaluation fell into three primary categories:

Findings

- Organizational support for participation: A majority of the focus group participants stated that they were encouraged to attend OULP sessions by superiors or colleagues. Survey data revealed that 74% of superintendents encouraged their staff to attend, and 38% of participants in other positions had been encouraged by their superintendent to attend. Four fifths of respondents (80%) had encouraged others in their position to attend, and 71% reported being encouraged by others in their position.

- Session structure and location: The most popular session structure, referring to the size of participant groupings during sessions, was a mix of whole group and small groups (54%). A slightly lower percentage (41%) preferred primarily whole group sessions, and only 6% preferred primarily small groupings. Respondent preferences for session format, referring to in-person versus web-based content delivery, were overwhelmingly in favor of in-person (82%); only 16% had an equal preference among the two formats, and only 2% preferred web-based sessions. In addition, respondents did not find the location of meetings to be a barrier to participation.

- Priorities for session features: More than half of respondents in the superintendent, treasurer, secondary principal, and “all principal” category selected “timely topic” as the top priority. The options that were most likely to be rated as least important were “presenters being engaging” and “large-group discussion,” especially for the superintendent, treasurer, and all three principal categories. In addition, it is noteworthy that a significant theme of the focus group feedback and survey open-ended responses was a desire for “no changes” to the program, demonstrating a high level of satisfaction with the program among participants.
Conclusion and Recommendations

Overall, focus group participants and survey respondents felt overwhelmingly positive about the OULP and desired no major changes in the future. However, as some amount of organizational change is inevitable over time, the recommendations focus on the ways in which the evaluation data may be useful for the OULP staff to apply going forward. In response to the findings, the following recommendations are made:

- Continue to address the professional development needs of school administrators in Southern Ohio
- Continue to invite participant input, especially in any area regarding program changes
- Continue to focus on partnerships with other organizations, in order to provide opportunities for networking among OULP participants and those organizations
- Consider logistical recommendations, including location and format
- Expand to additional school/district positions, such as administrative assistants
- Create a succession/transition plan for OULP leadership